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ABSTRACT

Technical and vocational education in the developing countries of the South Pacific region vary from the well-established to just commencing. Within the region as a whole, facilities exist to meet all the needs for semiskilled and skilled workers as well as for most middle and higher level needs; additional needs not catered to within the region can readily be met within adjacent countries. Most countries have established organizational structures from which further development of technical and vocational education can take place. Every country has a growing youth population who need further education to become full contributing members of their communities. Everywhere, officials are convinced that they need to provide such opportunities for their youths; however, a majority of the countries lack the financial resources as well as a sufficient supply of well-trained local personnel to administer and teach such programs and will need initial assistance to achieve this. (Most of this paper is made up of short summaries of the vocational education resources of the countries in the Pacific Region. The following countries are profiled: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa.) (KC)

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AN ASSESSMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

in the

SOUTH PACIFIC REGION

Paper presented at the AVA Conference, Dallas, Texas,
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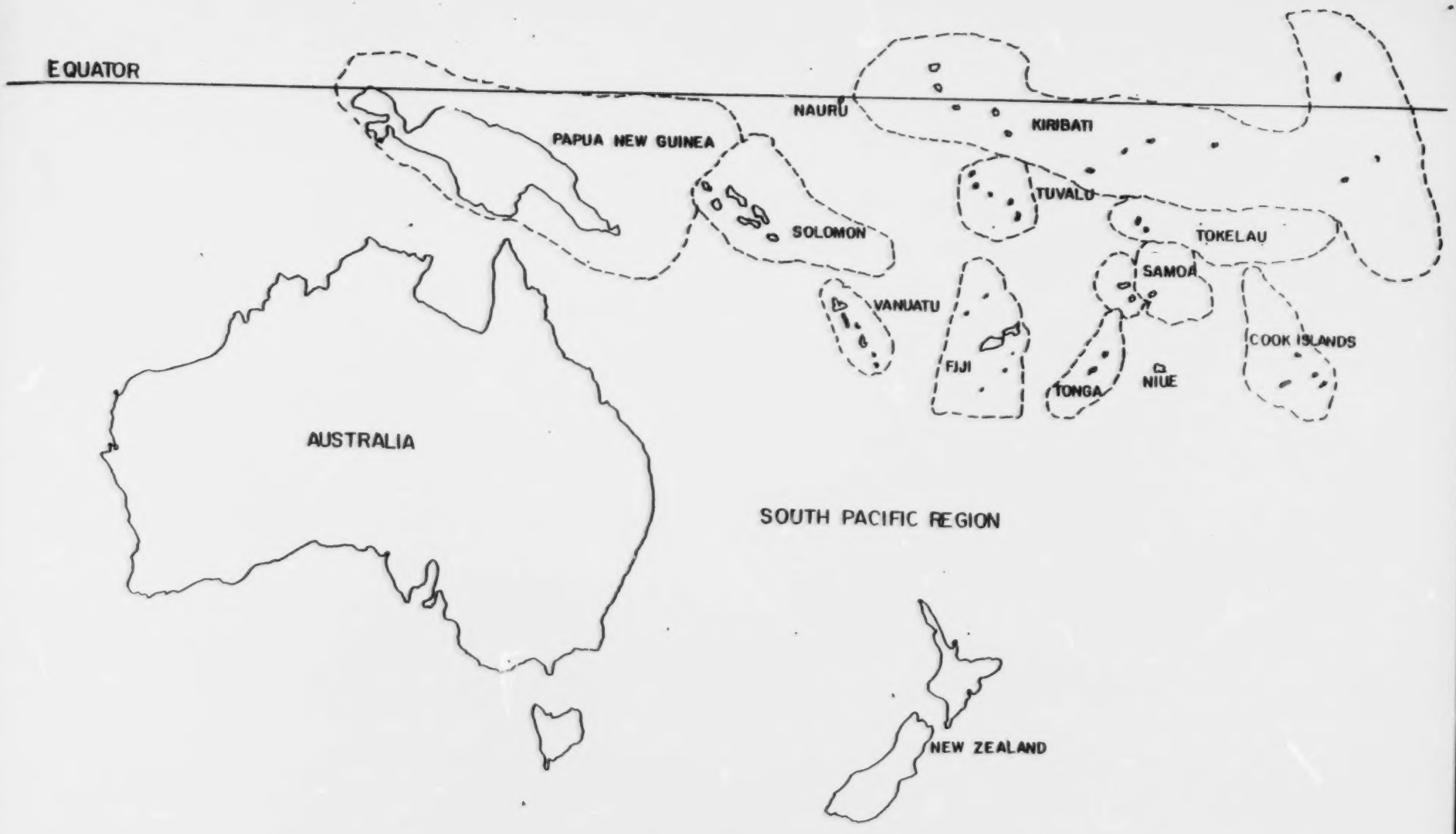
EQUATOR
NAURU
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PAPUA NEW GUINEA
TUVALU
SOLOMON
TOKELAU
SAMOA
VANUATU
COOK ISLANDS
FIJI
TONGA
NIUE
AUSTRALIA
SOUTH PACIFIC REGION
NEW ZEALAND

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INTRODUCTION

The South Pacific Region

The Pacific is divided into three major cultural areas: Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. Although these divisions overlap, each has people who have physical and cultural distinctions. There has always been a blending of the distinctions and, in the last 200 years, this blending has tended to accelerate. Another distinctive group which has comparatively recently arrived in the South Pacific is the 320,000 Indians in Fiji, who now outnumber the indigenous people.

While the countries of the South Pacific have some common characteristics, they are significantly different from each other in many respects. They have different forms of government and therefore of decision making; their people speak different languages; they have different ethnic backgrounds, cultural patterns, religions and histories. Furthermore they are separated from each other by hundreds or thousands of kilometers of ocean.

During the last 20 years, since they have started to become politically independent, the countries in the region have looked for support from a variety of outside sources, including countries which have had, traditionally, little connection with the South Pacific. In addition a wide range of international agencies and non-governmental organizations have become involved. Indeed the total aid resource which can be tapped is considerable and is still expanding.

In a recently published report by the Asian and Pacific Skill Development Program, results showed that in 1985 the South Pacific received "Most aid per capita, in the world." However, aid is spread very unevenly over the region. For example the report stated that in 1984 Niue (with a population of 3,000) received most aid per person (U.S. $56). Yet Fiji received the highest total amount which was U.S. $35 million out of a total allocation to the region (excluding Papua New Guinea and Nauru) of U.S. $168 million.

Inevitably there is an ambivalent attitude towards offers of aid; acceptance means some loss of hard won independence, whereas refusal can lead to a lowering of living standards. One partial way out of this dilemma has been to seek more regional cooperation.

Since 1970 more countries have gained full political independence and the spirit of regionalism has been nurtured. The governments of the region are fully conscious of their responsibilities to their people and of the need for balanced development. This consciousness, among other reasons, has resulted in the concept of regional cooperation being received with some enthusiasm. Over two hundred regional organizations now operate in the Pacific, where 20 years ago there were virtually none. Most of these are part of the networks of one or other of the five major organizations: the South Pacific Forum (which includes Australia and New Zealand); the University of the South Pacific; the South Pacific Commission; the Pacific Conference of Churches; and the United Nations. It is worthy of note that this spirit of cooperation has extended beyond the actual South Pacific region.

Technical and vocational education in the developing countries of the South Pacific region vary from the well-established to just commencing. Within the region as a whole, facilities exist to meet all the needs for semi-skilled and skilled workers as well as for most middle and higher level needs; additional needs not catered to within the region can readily be met within adjacent countries.

Fiji and Papua New Guinea have adequate facilities for most levels. These facilities, together with those of the University of the South Pacific, can cater to the manpower needs for most of the spectrum of known occupations--from semi-skilled worker to professional technologist. While Fiji has sufficient local teachers and administrators for the programs, Papua New Guinea will need to train many more locals in the next few years to take over these key functions from expatriates. Both countries reserve places in their programs for youths from other countries.

Most countries have established organizational structures from which further development of technical and vocational education can take place. Tertiary institutions, Apprentice Training Boards, as well as Manpower Training Committees often exist and could be made more accountable for the consolidation and coordination of an individual country's national training systems.

Every country has a growing youth population who need further education to become full contributing members of their own particular community. The most common means is through equipping them with skills that they can use to gain employment, to work on their own as small-time entrepreneurs, or to improve their livelihood through contributing to community development projects.

Everywhere, officials are convinced that they need to provide such opportunities for their youths. Everyone believes that each country should provide training for lower level and most technician level occupations, within the country. However a majority of the countries lack the financial resources as well as sufficient well-trained local personnel to administer and teach such programs and will need initial assistance to achieve this.

At present there is a tendency to focus resources for training at the more highly skilled technologist level (engineers, etc.) involving 4+ years at University. Observations and discussions with personnel at this top level reveal that some 50% of their time is spent working in the realm of the technicians, that is, in managing and coordinating the work of artisans.

The corollary to this is that consideration would be given to training fewer technologists at university graduate level and putting resources into training more technicians in order to provide adequate managers/coordinators at considerably less expense. The higher level technologists may then be freed to concentrate on design and problem solving more appropriate to their advanced training.

The countries welcome regional cooperation in education, but like to see 'fair play' and a better opportunity to actively participate in regional ventures. Opinions are that future regional ventures should be located in

the lesser developed island nations. While regional cooperation can contribute to better utilization of existing resources, every effort should be made to build up a core of technical and vocational education personnel in each country to initiate, manage and teach within the individual country's technical and vocational education system. This is seen as necessary in order to avoid over-dependence on external resources especially in regard to their manpower needs for all semi-skilled and skilled workers as well as for most technicians. I have the impression that people living in the South Pacific have a number of advantages over their brothers elsewhere. There is a refreshing spirit of cooperation and harmony throughout the region; people have a cultural awareness, live within supportive communities, and enjoy an unpolluted environment that many outsiders envy.

The following countries are presently working on a joint effort for the strengthening of technical and vocational education within the South Pacific region. I have given a brief introduction to each country and my impressions of existing resources that each country has.

COOK ISLANDS

Introduction

The Cook Islands have a population of 17,900, and a land area of 240 square kilometers, giving a population density of 75 persons per square kilometer. Its economy is relatively developed with more than half of the working population engaged in commerce, transportation, and services. Some 30% are engaged in agriculture (mainly fisheries) and there is a sizeable workforce in manufacturing and construction.

Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens with full access to New Zealand's educational facilities. Adult literacy is high (92%) and schooling is for twelve years with students preparing for New Zealand qualifications.

Impressions of Existing Resources

There is little formal training within the country, there being no technical or vocational training other than teacher training. However, the country has established an apprentice training scheme managed by an Apprentice Training Council. Employers actively participate in the scheme and meet the expenses of their trainees attending block release courses in New Zealand technical institutes. Currently there are 40 apprentices being prepared for New Zealand Trade Certification Board examinations.

FIJI

Introduction

Fiji is made up of over 300 islands, varying in size from 10,000 square kilometers to tiny islets; these are spread over thousands of square kilometers of ocean in the heart of the South Pacific.

Fiji is a multi-racial society with a population of approximately 634,000. Its geographical location and its development have contributed over the last two decades to its becoming the crossroads of air, shipping and trade services between North America, Australia, New Zealand, and other Pacific Islands. It is also the center for many areas of tertiary education with the University of the South Pacific main campus, Fiji School of Medicine and other tertiary institutions offering a variety of courses at different levels contributing to this.

Impressions of Existing Resources

Although Fiji's secondary education system does not provide adequate technical background to all secondary pupils, it has made remarkable progress in bridging this gap by establishing a multitude of post-secondary educational institutions offering a variety of courses at different levels to cater to the needs of government, the private sector, community, and voluntary organizations, as well as for neighboring countries.

The University of the South Pacific provides training for manpower requirements at middle and higher levels. The Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) with its various schools conducts a range of courses (from a few weeks to four years) for semi-skilled and middle level occupations. It is significant that there are only two schools of Hotel and Catering in the countries visited--one at Lae Technical College, Papua New Guinea, and a more extensive facility at FIT. Their School of Printing, although somewhat limited in its scope, is possibly the only training of this type existing in the region outside New Zealand and Australia.

The Fiji National Training Council (FNTC) organizes and conducts short training courses in response to employers' needs to upgrade and update their workforce.

The Telecommunication Training Center conducts a wide range of training for telecommunications (including meteorology and broadcasting) for Fiji and for some other Pacific Island nations.

The Agricultural College at Koronivia and the Navuso Agriculture School, the Multicraft Centers (about 30), SPC Community Education Training Center, YMCA training units and many other technical-vocational and theological institutions complement and supplement one another offering to the region a variety of courses at various levels as preparation for many different occupations.

The general impression is that the existing resources for technical and vocational education in Fiji are excellent. These are used to maximum effect by government departments, professional organizations, and the general public. The programs offered are good; physical resources are generally excellent although there is need for constant upgrading and extension so that training is responsive to economic development needs, as well as to social and technological changes in the country.

KIRIBATI

Introduction

Kiribati has a population in excess of 63,000, and a land area of 690 square kilometers scattered over 3,550,000 square kilometers of ocean.

Its sole mineral resource, phosphate, is not exhausted, and the current main cash crop is copra while the subsistence sector is based upon fish, coconut, breadfruit, babai, and pandanus. The Government is the major employer, there being little private sector activity.

The government hopes to achieve economic self-sufficiency primarily through the planned development of the fisheries resource and by maximizing copra exports. Besides limited population growth and promoting efficient land use, the government seeks to equip the country's manpower to undertake productive employment both within and outside Kiribati.

Kiribati has nine years of education (starting at age 6), and six years of secondary education (Forms I to VI). Whilst there is almost 100% attendance in primary education up to the age of 14, opportunities to proceed to the higher grades of secondary schooling are restricted by national examinations as well as by limited teachers and physical resources. There is only one government secondary school conducting Form VI classes. The majority leave after primary school and will continue to depend on subsistence agriculture with copra and fish as their major potential source of income.

Impressions of Existing Resources

Kiribati has established the institutions it requires to train necessary manpower. The Apprenticeship Board organizes the training of skilled workers required by government agencies through Tarawa Technical Institute and on-the-job training. The Tarawa Technical Institute also provides for a range of other training needs. The Marine Training School trains junior secondary school leavers for shipping jobs on foreign-going ships.

There is a shortage of trained local staff in the institutions, so indications are that the services of expatriates will be needed for some time to come.

NAURU

Introduction

Nauru is a small isolated island state in the South Pacific with a population of about 7,000. Its economy is based on phosphate mining which gives it one of the world's highest per capita incomes. About half the income from the phosphate exports is invested in long term trust funds to provide an income when the phosphate is exhausted (estimated to be by 1995).

A distinctive feature is the dependence on imports and the fact that nearly 50% of the island's workforce of about 1450, only 550 Nauruans actually hold positions. Within the government most of the management, technical,

and professional positions are held by expatriates. However, for some skilled manpower needs the Trade School provides training of locals although the type and level of training are too limited.

Impressions of Existing Resources

Within the facilities and resources available, most training at semi-skilled and skilled levels for most occupations could well be organized and conducted within the country.

The Trade School has adequate workshop facilities for most trade training in the mechanical, automotive, electrical (including refrigeration), and construction areas. There are also other areas of training that could be undertaken; however, the problem of skilled staff shortages needs to be resolved.

The Department of Works and Community Services has facilities to provide on-the-job apprenticeship training in many trade areas. However, most of the current skilled employees are expatriates.

The fishing fleet (2 vessels) has the necessary facilities and equipment for on-the-job training of fishermen. A small, but increasing percentage of Nauruans are employed in the fleet.

With six large ships in their Shipping Line there should be every opportunity for on-the-job training for the full range of shipping personnel. Similarly Air Nauru could cater to a wide range of training within the aviation industry.

The secondary school has basic woodworking and metalworking facilities and a very good home economics facility. The woodworking and metalworking shops need to be upgraded and industrial education implemented as a general secondary subject for all pupils. This would provide a better background for employment and/or further training than exists currently.

The Phosphate Corporation (the largest employer) conducts its own on-the-job training at operative level; training is each foreman's responsibility. Middle and upper level training needs are met by sending trainees to overseas institutions.

NIUE

Introduction

Niue is a raised atoll with little area suitable for cultivation. It has a land area of 259 square kilometers with a population of about 2,800. It has a negative population growth because Niueans have New Zealand citizenship and free access to New Zealand where many students undertake technical or vocational training. Others train in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, or Western Samoa.

Impressions of Existing Resources

On Niue the government is the major employer together with a few small companies engaged in wholesale/retail businesses. The Ministry of Works conducts its own on-the-job training mainly of an upgrading and updating nature.

The USP Extension Center enables local students to enroll in extension courses offered by the University, while the sole secondary school includes technical-vocational subjects as an integral part of the general education.

Because of Niue's relationship with New Zealand, the country is better off than many other Pacific Island nations in terms of opportunities for technical and vocational education.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Introduction

Papua New Guinea has a land area of 474,000 square kilometers; a population of about 3 million of whom 90% live in village communities and who speak about 700 different languages.

Besides cultural diversity the country has great physical diversity and is essentially an agricultural nation relying on primary industries for its income. It exports coconuts, rubber, coffee, cocoa, tea, and oil-palm and is rich in natural resources including huge deposits of gold, copper, and nickel.

The development of primary and secondary industries using its rich resources depends on the effective, parallel development of its human resources. Although this is not fully achieved, the facilities for technical and vocational education are probably the most comprehensive seen.

Impressions of Existing Resources

PNG has established a most comprehensive technical, vocational, and tertiary educational system--there being 66 separate institutions, 59 of which are government controlled. This is twice the number of similar institutions in New Zealand, a country of similar population.

The University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), the Pacific Adventist College (PAC) at Port Moresby, and the PNG University of Technology (UNITECH) at Lae offer a range of degree and diploma courses at middle and higher levels for sponsored school leavers completing grade 12 (minimum entry level).

Port Moresby Technical College, Lae Technical College, and similar technical or secretarial colleges offer a variety of pre-employment technical training courses (PETT) and apprentice and technician courses for school leavers completing grade 10 (as minimum entry qualification) of secondary education.

The country has established an Apprenticeship Board to manage its apprentice training scheme. This Board represents government, employer and trade union interests in a wide range of occupations.

Separate Boards of Studies manage each specific technician training. These are offered mainly at the Lae Technical College, while apprentice training is conducted mainly at Port Moresby Technical College. Each technical-vocational institution specializes in one particular set of occupations; for example, Teachers' College, Secretarial College, Customs Training Center, etc. A number of smaller institutions offer only PETT courses in one occupational cluster.

Lae Technical College's School of Catering and Administration is one of only two such training schools for the tourism industry in the region.

Although existing facilities are generally under-utilized, restriction in some cases is because of limited accommodations. The government policy of allocating 10% of places in all institutions for overseas students is seldom met. This under-utilization of facilities gives a very high unit/cost for many courses as does the multiplicity of small, single purpose institutions.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Introduction

The Solomon Islands have a population of about 226,000 and by comparison with most other countries surveyed, have a large land area of 28,530 square kilometers. This sparsely populated country has, basically, an agricultural economy exporting copra, palm oil, and timber as well as commercially harvesting fish from its vast seas.

There are six years of primary and five years of secondary education. Currently about 40% of school age children attend primary school and about 8% complete the eleven years of the schooling system. The authorities have established the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education with responsibility for preparing youths for employment in several fields: manufacturing, business and finance, shipping, education, para-medical studies, and agriculture. Other government agencies train on-the-job to meet their own manpower requirements.

Impressions of Existing Resources

The schooling system does not have adequate facilities to enroll all children of school-going age. Facilities for teaching manual skills to secondary school students is also limited.

The recent consolidation of tertiary education into the College of Higher Education has provided a firm organization foundation for technical and vocational education. However, courses in the School of Industrial Development were under-utilized at the time of the visit.

TOKELAU

Introduction

Tokelau is administered by New Zealand, has a population of 1,600, the smallest land area (10 square kilometers), and the second highest population density (160 per square kilometer) among the developing nations in the South Pacific.

Impressions of Existing Resources

The Official Secretary of the Tokelau Public Service is located in Apia, Western Samoa. He is assisted by five directors: a Director of Administration; Director of Health; Director of Education; Director of Public Works; and Director of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Tokelauans have New Zealand citizenship and their education and training needs are being met by New Zealand. Indeed more Tokelauans are residents in New Zealand than in Tokelau itself.

TONGA

Introduction

The Kingdom of Tonga consists of some 169 islands (36 inhabited) lying approximately between latitudes 15 and 23 degrees South and Longitudes 173 degrees East and 177 degrees West, and covering an area of about 360,000 square kilometers.

The economy is predominantly agricultural; 90% of total export earning comes from this sector, with subsistence farming as a common feature.

A notable feature is the concentration of facilities, resources, social services, and other provisions (including the limited technical and vocational educational provisions) in the main island of Tongatapu.

Impressions of Existing Resources

The facilities and resources currently used for technical and vocational education and training are those that were originally set up by employers to cater to their own needs.

Most, if not all, training consists of on-the-job training, supplemented by short courses/workshops, locally, or for middle and higher level, overseas. However, some students pursue a two-year secretarial course at St. Joseph's College or courses at university level at Atenisi Institute, although the latter does not have practical course facilities.

TUVALU

Introduction

Tuvalu is a small nation (population 9,000 and land area of 26 square kilometers) with the third highest population density in the region. Tuvaluans are Polynesians and have the advantage of virtually all speaking the same language.

Attendance is compulsory in both primary and attached community training centers (for post primary pupils who have not won admission to secondary schools). An estimated 95% of eligible children attend the eight government primary schools (or two religious junior primary schools) and the eight attached community training centers.

The only secondary school has a limited enrollment of 250 (annual intake being 45-50); and, in addition, a number of children have in the past been privately sent overseas for secondary education. Because of high costs, there has been recently a significant reduction in the number at overseas secondary schools. Limited numbers of people are required for specialist vocational roles and, as a result, the policy is to select and train overseas as and when required.

Tertiary education is mainly undertaken at USP and, to date, all secondary students who qualify (approximately 30 per year) are catered to. In addition the USP Extension Center on Funafuti promotes and provides a variety of external courses for about 90 students during the year.

The community training centers were designed to give basic skill training relevant to rural life and/or to enhance employment prospects together with additional teaching in English and Mathematics. Some 450 students were enrolled in 1985.

The Tuvalu Maritime School is the sole tertiary (post-school) institution and currently enrolls 20 trainees twice a year for a 12-month course with training in either deck, engine room, or steward specialities. This training is followed by up to 4 months experience at sea.

A small number of students are sponsored to undertake technical training overseas while about 40 in-service training awards are granted annually to civil servants to undertake technical or academic studies to improve their performance.

Impressions of Existing Resources

Skilled manpower needs for the shipping industry (and for other compatible work) could be met by the Maritime School given the planned improvement to their facilities.

The skilled tradesmen, technicians, and technologists currently employed within the public service are a valuable, but under-utilized, resource for raising the skills level of other workers.

The total allocation of study awards is probably sufficient to meet the overall training needs of upper level manpower.

VANUATU

Introduction

Vanuatu has a population of about 124,000 and a land area of 11,880 square kilometers giving a population density of about 10 per square kilometer.

A unique feature of the Vanuatu education system is that in 1980 when independence was gained, there were two quite separately funded and managed school systems. Recent years have seen the government make progress towards unifying administration and curriculum for schools.

There is a residual difficulty in technical and vocational education for school leavers. The National Technical Institute (NTI) which was established by the former French administration, is mostly staffed with French expatriates and French is the primary medium of instruction; therefore; very few locals receive technical and vocational education at the Institute although a number have had scholarships to train overseas.

Impressions of Existing Resources

The existing resources for technical and vocational education are an excellent base for extension. Programs offered at the NTI are well taught; physical resources there are excellent but the range and depth of programs could be extended beyond the current emphasis on pre-employment courses.

At the School of Nursing, basic courses for both locals and expatriates are adequate, though teaching facilities and resources are not extensive. The Government Training Center has inadequate facilities to mount the range of programs required while the Marine School staff are capable and enthusiastic but face a severe shortage of learning and teaching resources at the present site.

WESTERN SAMOA

Introduction

Western Samoa has a population of 165,000; a land area of 2,935 square kilometers; and a sea area of some 120,000 square kilometers. The country's population density is 53 persons per square kilometer, with about 50% of the population under the age of 15 years.

The Western Samoan economy is based on agricultural production, with exports mainly of copra and cocoa with the growing of bananas and taro for both domestic and export markets. There is also involvement in forestry, fishing, and cattle raising. Manufacturing is small-scale, and mostly concerned with processing of agricultural products and the production of some consumer goods, such as building materials.

Western Samoa has 8 years of primary and 4 years of secondary education. The secondary curriculum is closely oriented to New Zealand's.

Although the literacy rate is high (98%), it is understood that some 80% of school leavers return to their villages ill-prepared for productive work in their own communities.

Impressions of Existing Resources

Western Samoa has established a sound organizational structure for technical and vocational education. The Apprenticeship Act of 1972 is administered by a Council whose members represent the interests of government departments in training. Government departments are also involved in conducting staff development programs, in particular the Public Works Department, the Electrical Power Corporation, and the Telecommunications Department. A number of non-government organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) are also contributing to training.

However, Western Samoa has a high youth population, and it is suggested that the current training programs need to be expanded in order to cater to many more unemployed or under-employed out-of-school youths.

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